



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

NICK LYON
INTERIM DIRECTOR

February 6, 2015

The Honorable Peter MacGregor, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS
Michigan State Senate
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable Earl Poleski, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Senator MacGregor and Representative Poleski:

Section 1108(2) of 2014 Public Act No. 252 requires the Department of Human Services to distribute reports produced by the Northeast Michigan Community Services Agency (NEMCSA) related to the school success partnership program. The attached interim report was received from NEMCSA on January 30, 2015 and provides information on numbers served and the services provided to meet the four performance objectives of the program:

1. *Increasing school attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism.*
2. *Increasing academic performance based on grades with emphasis on math and reading.*
3. *Identifying barriers to attendance and success and connecting families with resources to reduce these barriers.*
4. *Increasing parent involvement with the child's school and community.*

If you have questions regarding this report, please contact Terrence M. Beurer, Director, Field Operations Administration, at (517) 373-3570.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Kangas".

Susan Kangas
Chief Financial Officer

CC: Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on DHS
Senate and House Fiscal Agencies
Senate and House Policy Offices

**Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Inc.'s
School Success Partnership Program**

Preliminary Evaluation Report: September – December 2014

January 31, 2015



School of Social Work

Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group

For more information, please contact:

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I. Background and Purpose

a. School Success Partnership Program Overview

The Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Inc.'s School Success Partnership Program (School Success) serves school-aged children and youth from Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade who are at-risk for academic failure. Students served by School Success are referred to the program due to academic need, poor attendance, aggressive behavior, crisis situations, withdrawn behavior, or being untended. School Success workers provide ongoing assistance to students, parents, and teachers by managing students' problem areas with specific short- and long-term goals. Students with additional needs are provided supplementary referrals to community resources, such as educational services, community mental health clinics, shelters, private practitioners, the Department of Human Services, and Child and Family Services.

School Success began approximately two decades ago in response to community awareness that school failure was a complex, multi-faceted issue, linked to chronic poverty, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, and a lack of parent education. Students served by School Success experience a variety of issues and conditions that affect school performance and create barriers to academic success, including family issues (e.g., divorce, unemployment, death), attendance issues, behavioral issues, transitional issues, and unmet mental health and/or medical needs. The program collaboratively works with students and their families, school administrators, teachers, and staff, and community agencies in order to address presenting issues and meet students' needs. As a result of participating in School Success, students are expected to have increased attendance; decreased behavioral incidents such as detention and suspension; improved academic performance, and advancement to the next grade level. Parents are expected to increase their involvement with their child's education.

School Success has become an integral resource for students, families, and schools in Northeast Michigan. As of the 2013-2014 Academic Year, School Success was active in 17 public school locations within four Northeast Michigan counties, including Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency, and Ostego. A 2013 evaluation by the Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group,

assessing the School Success program from 2009-2011, showed that approximately 65% of students participating in School Success demonstrated academic improvement and parental involvement increased for over 60% of students served. School Success program administrators recently sought to extend their reach, with the goal of providing services to help more students in Northeast Michigan. Given the commitment to students and families and the positive impact that the School Success program has had in Northeast Michigan, the state of Michigan recently allocated funds for the School Success Program's expansion to four new counties.

b. Evaluation Purpose

This purpose of this evaluation is to assess the current School Success Partnership Program and its expansion during the 2014-2015 Academic Year. The state of Michigan allocated \$300,000, 25% of the School Success program's \$1.3 million annual budget, to support exiting programming and expansion efforts. This 9-month evaluation aims to (1) document the expansion of School Success into four new counties in Northeast Michigan; and (2) assess the impact of the School Success Partnership program on four key performance objectives identified by the state.

The performance objectives to be measured and reported include:

1. Increasing school attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism.
2. Increasing academic performance based on grades with emphasis on math and reading.
3. Identifying barriers to attendance and success and connecting families with resources to reduce these barriers.
4. Increasing parent involvement with the parent's child's school and community.

This report presents preliminary evaluation results, based on School Success program data from September 2014 through December 2014.

II. Methodology

a. Design

A mixed methods process and outcome evaluation was utilized to assess the School Success program's expansion efforts and preliminary student outcomes. The process evaluation employed qualitative interviews with School Success administrators to document the program's expansion to four new counties between September and December 2014. The outcome evaluation used a Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine change in student outcomes over time in the School Success Partnership Program. Student outcomes include attendance and academic performance with emphasis on math and reading. Barriers to students' success in school, including potential mental/behavioral health concerns, poverty status were assessed and reported via descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to document School Success referrals made to other community resources as a result of identified barriers.

b. Data Collection

Data collection for the process evaluation was conducted via qualitative interviews with School Success program administrators.

The outcome evaluation used School Success administrative data collected between September and December 2014, including intake and closing forms as well as monthly evaluation forms. School Success workers are asked to fill out these forms for every student served. The administrative data was de-identified and parents signed a release of information form before their child's de-identified data was shared with the evaluation team.

The administrative data includes well-established, validated measures to assess students' academic performance and screen for common mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

c. Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended questions on monthly evaluation forms was coded manually for themes.

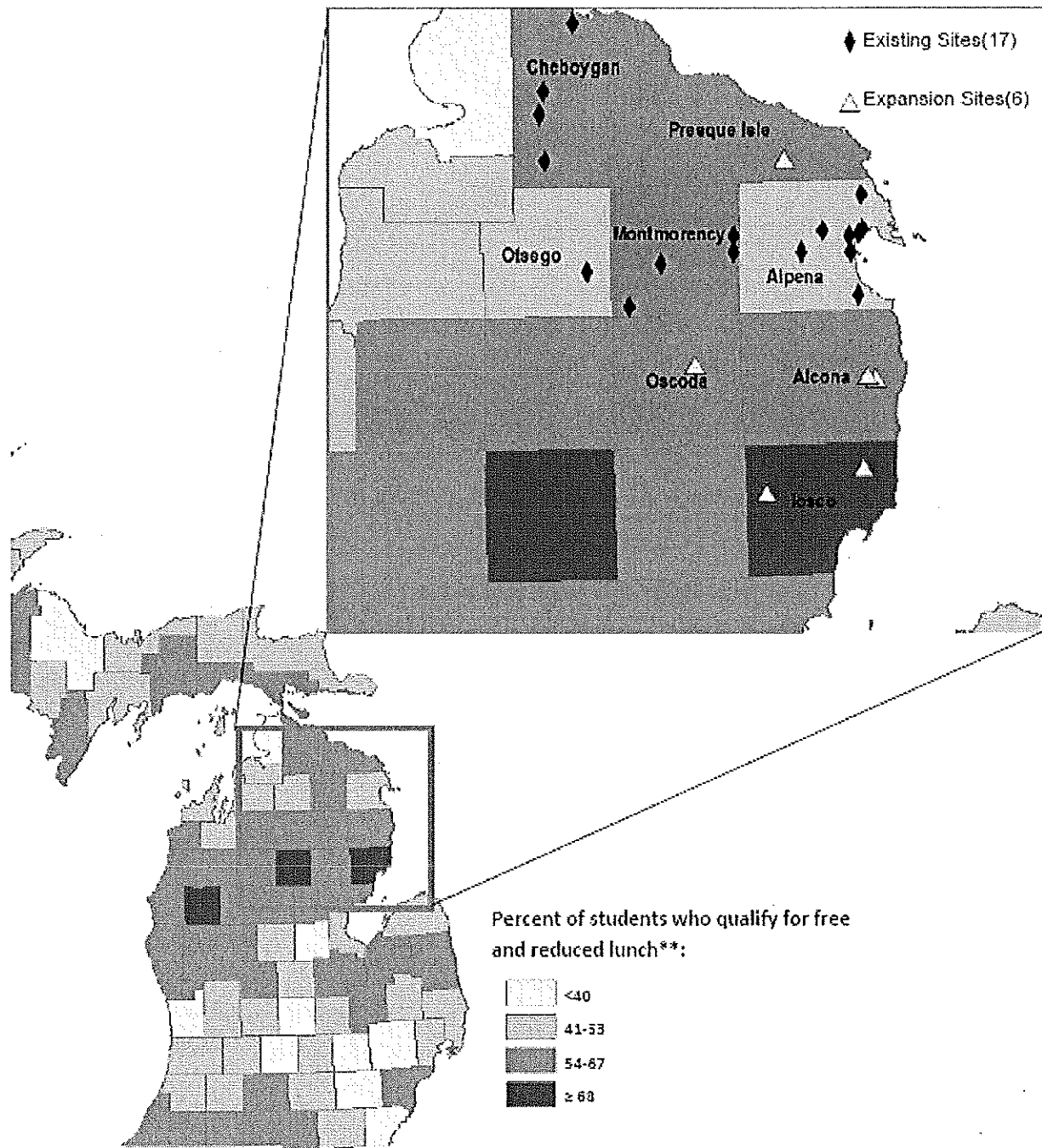
Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means were generated. Repeated Measures ANOVA was used to assess change in student outcomes over time in the School Success program.

II. Results

a. Expansion of the School Success Partnership Program

The School Success Partnership Program has expanded their services into four (4) new counties within Northeast Michigan: Alcona, Iosco, Oscoda, and Presque Isle (see Figure 1). School Success implemented their program in six schools within the four county expansion area between September 2014 and December 2014. As of December 31, 2014, School Success was serving 381 students, 77 of whom attended one of the expansion sites (see Table 1).

All counties served by School Success have higher free and reduced lunch rates than the Michigan average*



*Michigan average: 48.6%

**Source: 2013 data collected from Michigan Department of Education, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Nutrition. Center for Educational Performance Information (CEPI) (www.michigan.gov/cepi).

Table 1. School Success Partnership Program Sites: September – December 2014				
County	School Name	Number of Students in the School	Number of Students in School Success	Date Became School Success Site
Alpena	Alpena High School	360	20	--
	Besser Elementary	359	14	--
	Ella White Elementary	431	15	--
	Hinks Elementary	140	14	--
	Lincoln Elementary	150	14	--
	Sanborn Elementary	187	16	--
	Thunder Bay Jr. High	486	35	--
	Wilson Elementary	250	21	--
Cheboygan	Cheboygan Area High School	756	18	--
	Inland Lakes Elementary	390	19	--
	Inland Lakes Schools	392	11	--
	Wolverine Schools	304	18	--
Montmorency	Atlanta Schools	259	20	--
	Hillman Elementary	253	25	--
	Hillman Jr/Sr High	240	20	--
	Lewiston Elementary	174	11	--
Otsego	Johannesburg Middle School	316	13	--
Expansion Sites				
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	365	18	09/02/2014
	Alcona Jr/Sr High	370	20	09/02/2014
Iosco	Hale Schools	240	10	09/02/2014
	Oscoda Schools	587	5	11/03/2014
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	304	5	12/01/2014
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	235	19	09/02/2014

Results of qualitative interviews with School Success administrators regarding the program's expansion are presented in this preliminary report in order to document this effort and identify important barriers and facilitators to implementation.

i. Identifying and Collaborating with Expansion Sites

Interviews with School Success administrators described the rigorous outreach effort undertaken to identify new counties, and schools within those counties, for the program's

expansion. In order to meet their goal of expanding into four counties, School Success administrators reported directly contacting 11 school districts in seven Northeast Michigan counties. The seven counties were selected due to their proximity to existing School Success sites and their alignment with Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Inc.'s (NEMCSA) service area. Program administrators shared that this strategic decision increased the feasibility of the expansion effort, as the schools served remain concentrated in the Northeast Michigan region. Given the persistent poverty and high unemployment rates, this rural region of the state is in high need of resources and programming aimed at improving the quality of life of children and families. As NEMCSA remains the School Success program's home, it is important for School Success administrators and workers to be able to engage and collaborate with one another. Finally, one of the most common reasons students leave the School Success program is that they move out of the district into a new district that does not have the program as a resource. However, School Success administrators report that most students move to nearby districts. Therefore, increasing the availability of the School Success program in the region increases the opportunity for continuity of services for these students.

Of the 11 school districts in seven counties that School Success reached out to, six schools within four counties became partners, and have implemented the School Success program this academic year. Before reaching out to potential expansion sites, School Success administrators researched the districts, in terms of their geographical catchment area and the number of students, and documented needs as demonstrated by KIDS Count information (Annie E. Casey Foundation). School Success administrators explained that their outreach to potential expansion sites consisted of email, postal mail, telephone, and in-person contact to superintendents and principals. Administrators also presented information about School Success to School Boards and County Boards of Commissioners. Many of the school districts approached already knew about the program from word of mouth and media attention. Once School Success' planned expansion was public knowledge, some schools contacted them and meetings were conducted at their request. In fact, funding constraints prevented School Success from partnering with all of the interested counties, districts, and schools. School Success administrators reported that they established partnerships on a first come, first serve basis. Once all School Success resources allocated for expansion were utilized, there were still three additional counties and three more schools in the existed service area that wanted to partner with School Success.

Only one school district approached by School Success was not interested in implementing the program. School Success administrators indicate that representatives from this district felt they did not have a need for School Success at this time.

Once the six expansion sites within four counties were identified, School Success began reaching out to teachers and staff, as well as parents, to inform them about the program and its services. School Success administrators report introducing the program to teachers and staff via presentations during in-service days and staff meetings. Parents were informed via School Open Houses held prior to the first day of school, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, school newsletters, and newspaper articles.

ii. Hiring and Training Additional School Success Workers

The School Success program expansion resulted in the hiring of seven new School Success workers. This included six full-time positions and one part-time position. School Success workers were recruited through advertisements in local newspapers and on the NEMCSA website and via word of mouth. The positions required at least a bachelors degree in a human service field, and experience with at-risk populations was preferred. School Success program administrators also reported looking for individuals knowledgeable and invested in their communities. Newly identified partner schools assisted with the interview process. Administrators indicated that there were over 250 applicants for the seven open positions.

In preparation for the expansion, School Success administrators described making substantial changes to their employee training process. School Success administrators and workers collaboratively developed a formal employee handbook, which became the basis for a full-day training, and initiated a mentorship program to assist and support new workers. All newly hired School Success workers were paired with a mentor, who was an experienced School Success worker. Before serving students, new School Success workers shadowed their mentors, and once new School Success workers started serving students, mentors went on periodic site visits to provide guidance and ensure the program was implemented as intended. School Success workers also received the standard new employee training from NEMCSA, including workplace violence training, as well as standard training on School Success program requirements. On-going training and support is provided to School Success workers via monthly staff meetings.

Since September 2014, there has been no turnover among School Success workers. School Success administrators believe their low turnover may be due to the progress being made among students they serve, as well as the support they receive from other School Success workers and administrators.

iii. Strengths of Expansion Effort

School Success was able to expand into four new counties within the first three months of the 2014-2015 Academic Year. In fact, the program was implemented in four of the six new sites in September 2014. The expansion resulted in a 25% increase in the number of students served by School Success.

School Success program administrators identified their preparation for the expansion as one of the biggest strengths of the effort. Administrators spent a substantial amount of time learning about communities before implementing their program in new sites, which they believe helped create new partnerships and successfully transition to new schools.

Additionally, School Success administrators describe the program's local reputation as being an important strength of the expansion. Given that School Success is well known in the community and has been shown to improve outcomes for the students and families served, many schools and districts were eager to partner with the program and provide a proven, needed service to their students. Rural communities in Michigan have limited access to services and to dollars for those services, so being able to implement a known commodity with a track record of success was important for the new service sites.

Finally, the School Success program was developed in the rural context, and is therefore responsive to unique needs of communities in rural Michigan. Particularly, School Success provides services to students and families primarily at school, with home visits as needed. Therefore, the School Success program lessens transportation barriers, as the ability to participate is not contingent on parents' and students' ability to secure transportation to and from services. Further, School Success does not employ income-based eligibility criteria. This lessens stigma among rural populations that place high value on independence and self-reliance.

iv. Challenges of Expansion Effort

The major challenge of the expansion effort, as identified by School Success administrators was securing funding from partner schools. This was primarily due to the timing of the expansion in relation to budget years. When School Success partners with a school, both NEMCSA and the school provide funds to support the program. The School Success expansion effort began in the summer of 2014, and as the schools' new budget year began on July 1, 2014, it was difficult for expansion sites to readjust their budgets in order to partner with School Success. Schools were motivated to implement School Success, so the expansion sites worked to allocate monies to support the program. In some cases, schools were able to utilize Title I and other county funding streams to support School Success. The need to modify budgets that were already in place complicated the preparation of budgets, and subsequently billing and contract information, at each new expansion site.

Another challenge associated with the expansion effort was limited administrative support. As School Success expanded, the need for additional administrative support became clear. With only two administrators coordinating the expansion and day-to-day program management, as well as hiring and training new workers, it was evident that more help would be needed if the program expands again.

Finally, capacity issues emerged as a challenge during the expansion. First, School Success was not able to expand to all counties and schools interested in partnering. The program's current budget, including the \$300,000 allocated via state funds, was used to support existing programs and expand to four new counties, as directed, but NEMCSA does not have additional funds to partner. School Success administrators reported that their goal is to maintain their existing service area for at least another year. This will allow them to review their geographic catchment and work with partner schools to identify strengths and weaknesses at each site. The administrators plan to learn more about program implementation related to the current expansion effort before considering the addition of more sites. However, School Success administrators understand that each year will lead to increased costs, which will require increased funds to maintain current levels of service. If the program were to expand to the other three interested counties within the NEMCSA service area and fill requests of those schools interested in implementing services within existing counties, program administrators predict that their standard operating budget, the \$300,000 provided by the state plus an additional

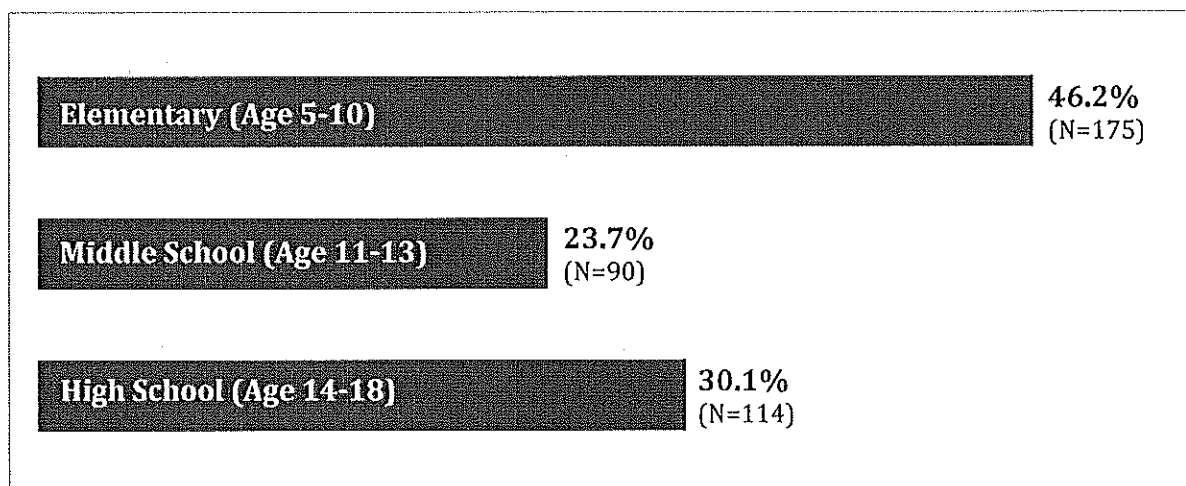
\$250,000-\$300,000 annually will be needed. Second, there are capacity-related issues among School Success workers due to variability in school size across sites. School Success protocol has been to assign one School Success worker per school, but this leads to the possibility of differential services across sites. In smaller sites, School Success workers can incorporate more preventive pieces, such as offering small group and school-wide presentations. In larger sites, School Success workers have larger caseloads, which limits opportunities for preventive services.

b. Students Served

i. Student Characteristics

As previously stated, between September and December 2014 the School Success program has served 381 students across 23 schools within eight counties. Almost half of the students served (N=175; 46%) by School Success are in elementary school, while 30% (N=114) are in high school. A little less than 25% of students served are in middle school (N=90; see Figure 2).

Figure 2. School Success Students by Age



On average, students served in the program are eleven years of age and in the sixth grade (see Table 2). The majority of students served by School Success are male (65%).

Table 2. Characteristics of Students Served by the School Success Partnership Program: September – December 2014

Table 2. Characteristics of Students Served by the School Success Partnership Program: September – December 2014										
County	School Name	Students Served	Gender	Age		Grade Level		Free & Reduced Lunch	Current IEP	Current 504
Existing Sites			% Male	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	% Eligible	% Yes	% Yes
Alpena	Alpena High School	20	45%	14.8	1.6	9.4	.80	90%	20%	15%
	Besser Elementary	14	64%	6.9	2.1	2.8	1.7	79%	7%	0%
	Ella White Elementary	15	80%	7.3	2.1	3.3	1.8	93%	7%	0%
	Hinks Elementary	14	79%	8.2	1.9	3.6	1.4	86%	14%	36%
	Lincoln Elementary	14	71%	8.6	1.5	3.2	1.3	100%	7%	0.0%
	Sanborn Elementary	16	69%	8.1	1.1	3.3	1.4	94%	6%	13%
	Thunder Bay Junior High	35	57%	12.4	1.2	7.1	.91	86%	23%	26%
	Wilson Elementary	21	57%	7.3	1.6	2.8	1.5	79%	10%	10%
Cheboygan	Cheboygan High School	18	17%	14.4	1.3	9.1	.90	100%	17%	11%
	Inland Lakes Elementary	19	68%	7.0	1.9	2.7	1.7	74%	11%	0.0%
	Inland Lakes	11	46%	14.3	1.8	9.6	2.6	100%	0%	55%
	Wolverine	18	61%	14.9	2.2	9.0	1.8	67%	17%	22%
	Atlanta Schools	20	80%	10.9	3.7	6.7	3.0	85%	40%	5%
Montmorency	Hillman Elementary	25	72%	9.1	2.0	4.2	1.1	64%	20%	8%
	Hillman High School	20	75%	14.9	1.6	9.0	1.6	75%	25%	20%
	Lewiston Elementary	11	73%	9.3	1.6	4.5	1.7	55%	0%	0%
Otsego	Johannesburg Middle School	13	62%	10.9	3.3	5.6	2.8	62%	31%	39%
Expansion Sites										
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	18	83%	9.1	2.4	3.6	1.8	94%	28%	0%
	Alcona Jr/Sr High School	20	60%	14.4	1.5	9.3	1.4	80%	5%	0%
Iosco	Hale Schools	10	90%	9.3	3.5	4.4	3.4	100%	10%	0%
	Oscoda Schools	5	80%	12.2	4.8	6.8	4.3	80%	20%	20%
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	5	60%	16.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	100%	20%	20%
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	19	74%	13.3	3.4	7.9	3.2	47%	11%	0%
Overall										
		381	65%	11.0	3.6	6.2	3.1	81%	16%	12%

Though the School Success program does not have income-based eligibility criteria, 81% of students served are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In the state of Michigan, 48.6% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch (Michigan Department of Education, 2013), suggesting a substantially higher proportion of students served by the School Success program are economically disadvantaged when compared to students across the state.

Furthermore, 16% of students served by the School Success program have a current Individualized Education Program (IEPs) and 12% of students have a 504 plan. As of the 2012-2013 academic year, 13.5% of Michigan students had IEPs (U.S. Department of Education). Therefore a slightly higher proportion of students in the School Success program have IEPs when compared to students across the state.

Additionally, School Success began screening students for common mental health disorders this academic year. School Success workers were asked to screen all students for depression (Patient Health Questionnaire-2; Spitzer & Kroenke, 2002) and anxiety (Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders – Brief Version; Birmaher et al., 1997) at intake. High school students, age 14-18, were also screened for substance abuse (CRAFT; Knight et al., 2002). Results suggest that of 360 students assessed, 33.6% of students screened positive for depression. Of 359 students completing the anxiety measure, 44.3% screened positive for anxiety related emotional disorder. Finally, almost 20% of the 107 students assessed were found to be at increased risk for substance abuse.

Table 3. School Success Students Screening Positive for Mental Health Concerns at Intake					
Patient Health Questionnaire-2 for Depression (N=360)		Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (N=359)		CRAFT Substance Abuse Screening Test (N=107)	
Score ≥ 3 indicates a positive screen		Score ≥ 3 indicates a positive screen		Score ≥ 2 indicates increased risk for substance abuse	
N	%	N	%	N	%
121	33.6%	159	44.3%	20	18.7%

ii. Reason for Referral

Over two-thirds (67.1%; N=256) of the students who entered the School Success program between September and December 2014 were referred for services by their teachers (38.8%; N=148) or parents (28.3%; N=108). School Success workers and school principals each referred approximately 10% of students as well. Less common referral sources included probation officers, school counselors, family members other than parents, and school secretaries (see Table 4).

Table 4. School Success Partnership Program Referral Sources (N=381)		
Referral Source	Total	
	N	%
Teacher	148	38.8%
Parent	108	28.3%
School Success Worker	40	10.5%
Principal	35	9.2%
Probation Officer	13	3.4%
School Counselor	11	2.9%
Family Member (Non-Parent)	6	1.6%
Secretary	4	1.1%
ESD	2	0.5%
Family Services	1	0.3%
Court System	1	0.3%
Other	12	3.1%

This academic year to date, students were most commonly referred to School Success for academic concerns (N=233), followed by attendance concerns (N=109), crisis (N=103), and aggressive behavior (N=99). Fewer students were referred due to withdrawn behavior (N=65) or being untended (N=28). It is important to note that students can be referred to School Success for more than one reason so the reasons for referrals total more than the number of students served (N=381).

Table 5. School Success Partnership Program Reasons for Referral	
Reasons for Referral	Total N
Academic Concerns	233
Attendance Concerns	109
Crisis	103
Aggressive Behavior	99
Withdrawn	65
Untended	28
Other	10

iii. Contacts

From September to December 2014, School Success workers had over 12,000 contacts related to students they serve (see Figure 3 and Table 6). Approximately two-thirds of these contacts (N=8123; 66.8%), were direct, school-based interactions, in which the School Success worker met with the student and/or parents at school. On average, students and families received between 7.4 and 10.0 school-based contacts with School Success per month. Almost 20% of School Success contacts (N=2271) consisted of phone calls and letters related to the case. These calls and letters may be to parents, teachers, staff, and principals at school, or community resources. A little over 10% (N=1373) of contacts were classified by School Success workers as "other." When asked to specify these contacts, workers most commonly described face-to-face meetings with teachers, staff, and principals at school, face-to-face meetings with the students' other providers and/or referral sources, and accompanying students and families to appointments. Less than 5% of the contacts consisted of home visits (N=390).

Figure 3. School Success Program Contacts: September – December 2014

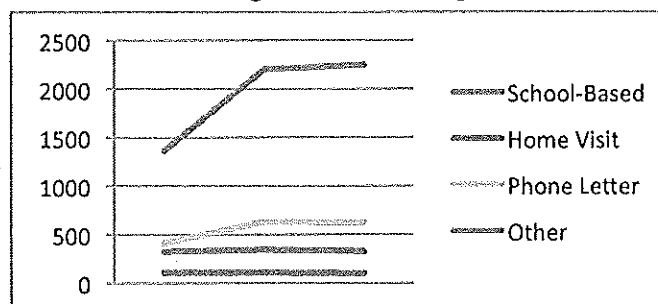


Table 6. School Success Partnership Program Contacts: September – December 2014

Contact Type	September 2014			October 2014			November 2014			December 2014			Total
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N
School-based	1363	8.0	7.0	2309	10.0	8.8	2202	7.4	5.5	2249	7.4	5.8	8123
Home Visit	106	.91	2.2	81	.52	.91	104	.48	.81	99	.46	.73	390
Phone/Letter	410	2.6	2.9	608	2.9	3.6	628	2.4	2.2	625	2.3	2.4	2271
Other	323	3.1	4.6	383	2.9	3.0	341	2.0	2.8	326	1.9	2.9	1373
Total	2202			3381			3275			3299			12,157

c. Performance Objectives

i. Increasing School Attendance and Decreasing Chronic Absenteeism

Descriptive statistics suggest that 50% of School Success students had increased school attendance between September and December 2014. Results of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) demonstrate a statistically significant pattern of difference in absences per month among students served by the School Success program between September and December 2014, suggesting a decrease in the number of absences per month over time in School Success. In fact, on average, students in the program attended 0.6 more days of school per month in December, than in September. This equates to an additional 91 days of school attended by the 153 students continuously served by School Success since September 2014.

Table 7. Change in Students' Attendance Over Time in the School Success Program: Results of One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA (N=153)

	September 2014		October 2014		November 2014		December 2014		F	df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Days Absent per Month	2.20	2.5	2.17	2.3	1.70	2.3	1.61	2.1	3.10	3	.027

ii. Increasing Academic Performance Based on Grades with Emphasis on Math and Reading

Results of descriptive analysis suggest that 41% of School Success students demonstrated an improvement in the overall quality of their academic work between September and December

2014. Additionally, 39% of School Success students improved the quality of their math skills and 32% improved the quality of their reading skills.

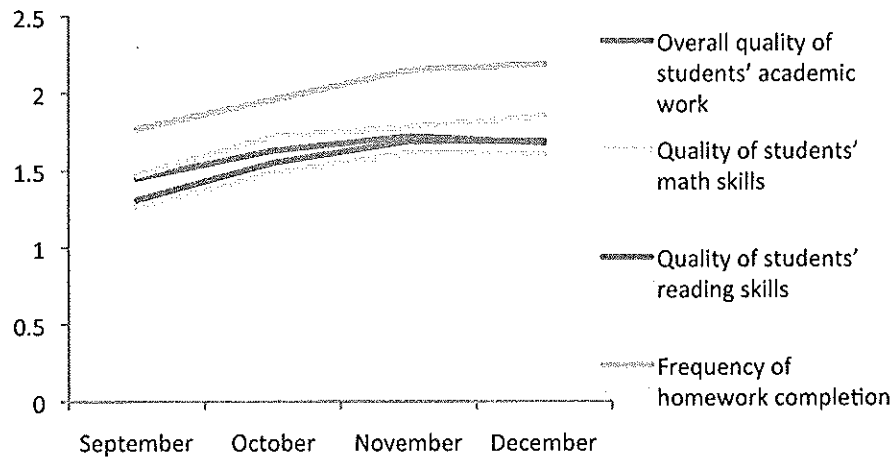
Furthermore, there was a statistically significant pattern of difference in overall quality of academic work, quality of math skills, quality of reading skills, frequency of homework completion, and quality of completed homework among students served by the School Success program between September and December 2014, indicating improvement in academic performance over time in the School Success program. These academic performance indicators reflect a modified version of the Academic Performance Rating Scale (DuPaul, Rapport, & Perriello, 1991). School Success workers rated the quality of students' academic performance on a scale of one (poor) to four (excellent), and frequency of homework completion on a scale of one (never) to four (very often), on a monthly basis.

Please note that as the schools in this region operate on a trimester system, it was not possible to assess academic performance via change in students' grades over time in the School Success program for this preliminary report. Students' grades, including overall GPA and grades in Math and Reading will be assessed as an indicator of academic performance for the final report in June 2015.

Table 8. Change in Students' Academic Achievement Over Time in the School Success Program: Results of One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA (N=153)

	September 2014		October 2014		November 2014		December 2014		F	df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Overall quality of students' academic work	1.31	1.1	1.55	1.0	1.69	1.0	1.69	1.0	15.29	2.68	<.001
Quality of students' math skills	1.27	1.1	1.48	1.0	1.61	1.0	1.60	.97	13.02	2.26	<.001
Quality of students' reading skills	1.45	1.1	1.63	.96	1.72	1.0	1.68	1.0	6.74	2.30	.001
Frequency of homework completion	1.77	1.1	1.96	1.1	2.15	1.1	2.19	1.1	3.28	2.35	.032
Quality of completed homework	1.47	1.0	1.72	.96	1.78	.99	1.85	1.2	5.44	2.47	.003

Figure 3. School Success Students' Academic Performance: September – December 2014



iii. Identifying Barriers to Attendance and Success and Connecting Families with Resources to Reduce these Barriers

Each month, School Success workers document barriers to academic success experienced by students they serve. Thematic analysis suggests that family issues, behavior issues, and mental health or learning disability-related issues present substantial barriers to academic achievement for students served by School Success. As expected, academic and attendance issues, the top two reasons for referral to the program, emerged as barriers to students' success as well. The reported barriers and examples of each are included in Table 9., below.

Table 9. Barriers to School Success Students' Academic Achievement		
Barrier	Number of Times Mentioned	Quotes from School Success Worker Report
Family Issues	156	<p>"This student is dealing with the new separation of her parents and is having difficulty regulating her emotions in school."</p> <p>"This student has been struggling with some family issues at home and has become very emotional and sensitive this month."</p>
Behavior Issues	155	<p>"Student has aggression and ODD and doesn't want to follow classroom/school rules"</p> <p>"Behavior issues in the classroom affecting grades/work completion"</p> <p>"Doesn't take any homework home, tells parent no school work"</p>

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Academic Issues	148	"This student continues to struggle with reading and comprehension, but has seen some success and is now more motivated to do well."
Mental Health or Learning Disability-Related Issues	139	<p>"Student has autism struggles with socialization has meltdowns"</p> <p>"Child has a diagnosis of ADHDtrying to get back on meds"</p>
Attendance	100	<p>"This student has continued to be late or miss first hour."</p> <p>"This student has been ill a lot this year already. This is a barrier to her succeeding because of missing so much class time."</p>

Once School Success workers identify barriers to students' academic achievement, they work with students and families to resolve barriers and increase students' ability to success in school (see Table 10). The most common approach to resolving barriers involves creating a plan or system with the student and/or parent or guardian. The plans often consist of strategies that students and parents can employ to overcome barriers. For example, one School Success worker devised a plan for a student having anger issues impeding success at school, in which the student would excuse himself and come to the School Success office when starting to feel irritated or angry.

Meeting and talking with students also emerged as an important strategy for overcoming barriers to academic achievement. These meetings provide an opportunity for students to share feelings or discuss issues they are having, as well as a venue for School Success workers to offer important guidance and information. Additionally, School Success workers described educating students and parents, by sharing information and providing skills, as a way to overcome barriers. This information and associated skills are often used to support the plans collaboratively developed to assist students and families. Finally, School Success workers

provide referrals to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of the School Success program.

Table 10. Resolution to School Success Students' Barriers		
Resolution to Barrier	Number of Times Mentioned	Examples from School Success Worker Report
Created Plan/System with Student	172	<p>"[Student] has done very well working through his anger. He tries the techniques we talk about. He does still get irritated very quickly, but he excuses himself from that situation and comes down to my office to defuse. He is getting better each week."</p> <p>"Student will report to School Success Office before calling home for illness."</p>
Partnered with Parent or Guardian to Create Plan	165	<p>"I have met with student, mother and future step-father to discuss issues at home. I assisted mom in setting up chores and appropriate consequences at home."</p>
Met/Talk with Student	141	<p>"I have begun to build a rapport with this student who is new to our school as of last month. She is seeking someone to be able to talk to besides her parents."</p> <p>"Talked with the student about a high school diploma being necessary to get into the post-high school program he wants to attend."</p>
Provided skill/information	88	<p>"Worked with mother to help establish a concrete sleep pattern. Student now getting more sleep."</p> <p>"Using calming activities to help alleviate sensory issues"</p>
Referral	82	<p>"Referral to DHS community giving program"</p> <p>"Referral made to Middle School Teacher Aide for after school homework help 2x a week."</p>

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collaboratively developed to assist students and families. Finally, School Success workers provide referrals to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of the School Success program.

Table 11. School Success Referrals: Connecting Students and Families to Community Resources September 2014 - December 2014					
Referral Type	September 2014	October 2014	November 2014	December 2014	Total
	N	N	N	N	N
Education Services	22	33	21	28	104
Private Practitioner/Counselor	21	21	18	20	80
Community Mental Health	18	24	18	18	78
Department of Human Services	11	20	25	16	72
NEMCSA	17	16	16	17	66
School-Based Health Clinic	11	10	16	7	44
Homeless Services	9	11	5	7	32
Child and Family Services	10	9	2	5	26
Salvation Army	5	7	7	3	22
Mentoring	3	6	6	4	19
Employment Services	5	5	3	4	17
Health Department	4	5	2	4	15
Shelter Services	1	2	2	3	8
Substance Abuse Services	1	0	1	0	2
Overall	138	169	142	136	585

Providing referrals and connecting students and families to needed community resources represents an integral part of the School Success program. In fact, from September to December 2014, School Success workers reported making 585 referrals to community resources. While School Success makes referrals to a range of community resources, as summarized in Table 11, above, School Success students were most commonly referred to Education Services (N=104), followed by Private Practitioners/Counselors (N=80) and Community Mental Health (N=78). This may reflect the substantial documented barriers related to mental health and learning disability-related issues, as well as the high symptom levels of depression and anxiety found among students served.

iv. Increasing Parental Involvement with the Parent's Child's School and Community

School Success workers reported engaging with parents at least 165 times from September through December. This engagement directly demonstrates an increase in parent's involvement with their children and school (see Table 12).

Most commonly, School Success workers and parents collaborated to implement a plan to improve the student's behavior or academics. Through these plans, parents often employed strategies to help their child succeed, thereby increasing their involvement in their child's daily life both at home and at school. School Success workers also often provided parents with information and education about their child's needs. School Success worker reports indicate that parents sometimes are not sure how to get involved or what is needed to help their child. By offering this information, School Success helps to increase parental involvement.

Additionally, many workers noted that with the support of School Success, parents took an active role in participating in meetings with teachers, principals, and other providers in order to collaboratively address their child's needs. School Success workers also documented that parents increased their involvement with their children and other family members by attempting to better understand their perspectives. Workers were able to facilitate productive discussion or dialogue between parents and children, or provide small group sessions for families to share and discuss issues they were having at home. Finally, some parents sought referrals from School Success to help themselves or other family members.

Table 12. Involvement and Engagement Among Parents: September – December 2014		
Parental Involvement	Number of Mentions	Examples from School Success Workers
Parent implemented plan developed collaboratively with School Success worker to improve student behavior/academics	53	<p>"Worked with mother to establish an earlier bedtime. Saw behavioral improvement with increased rest."</p> <p>"Parent now laying out clothes and making sure to check daily for cleanliness."</p>
Parent received education and information about child's needs from School Success worker	53	<p>"Worked with guardian to explain importance of medical documentation on file to exempt student from participation."</p> <p>"I arranged a meeting with this student's mother and required her to bring in the doctor's excuses for her son's 5 absences she only had medical documentation for 3 absences. I informed her that she needed to obtain 2 more from her doctor or I would file a petition with the family court system."</p>
Parents engaged with child's school, with support of School Success worker, to collaboratively address child's performance	19	"Had meetings with teacher, parent and principal to find a solution and have the student in the class."
Parents engaged with their child and families as facilitated by School Success workers	9	<p>"I arranged and facilitated a meeting with this student and his mother [so] that he could express how he was feeling. It had a very positive outcome."</p> <p>"We are doing a blended families small group once a week with this student her three future step-brothers. I have met with student, mother and future step-father to discuss issues at home."</p>
Parents attended appointments with child's providers, supported by School Success workers	7	"I attended a doctor's appointment with this student's parents, his CMH counselor, and his doctor from Ann Arbor."
Parents sought referrals from School Success for resources to help themselves or family members other than their child	6	<p>"Assisted mother with resources for helping Grandma and Grandpa."</p> <p>"Parents placed on medication for ADHD"</p>

III. Discussion

The School Success Partnership Program initiated a large scale expansion effort, doubling the number of Northeast Michigan counties served between the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Academic Years. School Success met the state's requirement of expanding into four new counties by December 2014, with the majority of schools implementing the program in September 2014. As a result, School Success is now serving students and families in six additional schools, and increased the number of students served by 25% (N=77). Qualitative interviews with School Success administrators suggest that the success of the expansion effort was in part due to substantial, strategic planning and preparation for implementing the program at new sites, targeting potential partners in counties adjacent to existing service sites, and highly motivated school that saw the program as addressing unmet needs among their students.

As of December 2014, School Success was serving 381 students, the majority of whom are economically disadvantaged. Almost one-fifth of students served by School Success have Individualized Education Program and students in the School Success program screened positive for depression and anxiety at rates substantially higher than the national prevalence estimates for children and adolescents. This indicates that School Success serves students with a high level of need and with a myriad of risk factors for academic problems.

Students were most commonly referred to School Success by parents and teachers (67%; N=256). The primary reasons for referral were academic concerns and attendance concerns. In order to support and assist students and families in addressing these concerns and increasing academic performance, School Success workers made over 12, 000 contacts with students and families between September and December 2014. The majority of these contacts consisted of direct interaction with the students and families at the school. It is important to note that the structure of the School Success program likely decreases many substantial barriers faced by rural populations. Students and families do not have to secure transportation in order to receive services, as School Success workers meet students at school, schedule home visits as needed, and take students and families to appointments. Further, the program is free for students and families, eliminating cost barriers, but does not have income-based eligibility criteria which lessens stigma that may be associated with utilizing public services among rural residents.

As of December 2014, students who had been served by School Success since September were making significant progress related to the program's performance objectives. Specifically, at this point, not even half way through the school year, 50% of students served by School Success demonstrated increased attendance. On average, student attendance increased by 0.6 days per month between September and December 2014. Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance indicated that there was a statistically significant decrease in the number of days absent per month over time in the School Success program.

Additionally, 41% of School Success students demonstrated improvement in the overall quality of their academic performance, with 39% showing improvement in math skills and 32% showing improvement in reading skills. Again, students' mean scores related to quality of academic performance, quality of math skills, reading skills, and homework increased over time in School Success program. Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance found that this increase was statistically significant for all indicators of academic performance assessed.

Furthermore, School Success workers are actively identifying barriers to students' academic achievement and linking students and families to community resources needed to resolve barriers beyond the scope of their program. Between September and December 2014, School Success workers made 585 referrals to community resources on behalf of students and their families. Referrals were most frequently made to Educational Services, Private Practitioners and Counselors, and Community Mental Health.

Finally, School Success is actively engaged with parents and supporting them as they increase involvement with their child, the child's school, and community. School Success reported 165 interactions with parents that demonstrated increased involvement from September to December 2014. School Success is actively helping parents to identify strategies to support their children's academic success and providing support in attending meetings and engaging with the child's school and community resources.

a. Limitations

While this preliminary evaluation report has many strengths, including the mixed methods research design and the use of established, empirically validated outcome measures, there are some limitations that need to be addressed.

One of these limitations relates to the measures. The performance objectives seek to assess increase in academic achievement based on grades, with an emphasis on math and reading. Given the time period this report covered, it was not possible to use grades as an outcome measure. The schools served in Northeast Michigan operate on a trimester system. As a result, second trimester report card grades were not available to be included in these analyses. Grades will be used to measure this performance objective in the June 2015 report. Additionally, the performance objective related to increasing parental involvement was assessed by School Success workers report. This measure of parental involvement could be improved, as it is also important to obtain parents' self-report. A well-established measure of parental involvement from the parent perspective has been identified and will be administered in February and June of 2015.

Second, results assessing performance objectives related to attendance and academic performance are limited to an analytic sample of students who entered the School Success program in September 2014 and were continuously served through December 2014. This limitation is due to the fact that the analytic strategy, Analysis of Variance, while appropriate, cannot account for missing data. In order to best understand the impact the program had on students over this time point, it was necessary to restrict the analytic sample to the students continuously served. Additional analytic strategies that can account for missing data and adjust for time in the program, will be considered for future analyses and the June report.

IV. Next Steps

As the evaluation team prepares to continue assessing the School Success Partnership Program over the next six months, we plan to take the following steps:

1. Continue collecting monthly administrative data and providing status reports to School Success administrators.
2. Survey principals of expansion sites to obtain their perspective of program implementation.
3. Survey School Success workers about program strengths and areas for improvement, with emphasis on workers serving expansion sites.
4. Survey parents in February and June 2015 regarding their involvement and perception of barriers to their child's success.
5. Obtain end-of-year data related to School Success' truancy program to be reported in June.
6. Look at year-end outcomes over last three years at expansion sites and compare to this year.

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